

# Fitness key to healthy pregnancy



Pregnant Soldiers from across Fort Bragg participate in a tri-weekly physical training session that takes place at Tucker Physical Fitness Center in coordination with the Pregnancy Wellness Program.

Fort Bragg Pregnancy Wellness Program helps keep pregnant Soldiers in tip-top shape.

Story, photos by Ali Leone  
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Aside from the swollen ankles, excessive hunger, extreme fatigue and the endless list of symptoms, pregnancy can be a truly wonderful and miraculous experience.

However, the process can take its toll on one's body and physical fitness.

Fort Bragg's female Soldiers aren't taking this problem lying down.

To combat this issue and keep Soldiers in tip-top shape, Womack's Community Health Program manages the Pregnant Soldier Wellness Program.

In September 1994, under the guidance of the U.S. Army's Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine Community Health at Fort Bragg have developed the PSWP to assist troops with a safe exercise program both before and after pregnancy.

"The program really focuses on helping Soldiers stay healthy and physically fit during pregnancy so they can get back to work quicker and have less complications with their delivery," said Maj. Renee Ponce, Army Community Health nurse for the Department of Preventive Medicine.

Currently, the program is not a requirement for pregnant Soldiers. However, most units encourage their Soldiers to participate.

Ponce cited that it is not only in the best interest of the expectant mothers' health, but in the various commands to which they are assigned.

"This program is comprehensive, involving not only physical training but educational classes," she said.

Nakita Delgado, PSWP program coordinator, agrees, as she has witnessed the benefits for those participating in the program. In addition, she says the Soldiers gain support from other Soldiers in the program.

“We focus on exercises that are challenging enough to provide the Soldiers with good exercise, but does not put them at risk,” she explained.

Delgado added that Soldiers are broken down into groups according to where they are in their pregnancy and exercises are geared to that stage.

Soldiers are made aware of the program through their commands as well as the various clinics.

All the clinics’ staff members support the program and promote it to the Soldiers during their initial pregnancy counseling.

Prior to enrollment, Soldiers must receive a memorandum from their unit releasing them from unit PT to participate.

Delgado said enrollment is held every Monday at 8:45 a.m. in the Preventive Medicine Bldg. 1-2539.

Soldiers may choose to join at any time during their pregnancy or shortly thereafter.

“We have some Soldiers who have joined in the late pregnancy stages and some that have come after their delivery to help them get back into shape,” Delgado said.

The Pregnancy PT session is held in the mornings every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at Tucker Gymnasium.

In addition, Soldiers are provided with a variety of classes in the afternoons on Tuesday and Thursday. The topics range from breast feeding to parenting techniques.

Delgado also encouraged family members to find a fitness program that they would enjoy, stressing that there are several health centers in the Fort Bragg area that offer courses like water aerobics and other pregnancy related fitness sessions.



**Pfc. Randell Reid, Headquarters, Headquarters Company, 507th Combat Support Group, performs a stretching routine during a cool down period as part of the Pregnant Soldiers Wellness Program physical training session.**

“I think it is important to do some type of exercise when pregnant, bearing in mind of course, to consult with your physician first and (remembering) what your fitness level was before you became pregnant,” Delgado said. “Doing something and doing it safely are the key though.”

Both Ponce and Delgado agreed that the sweltering summer months can prove hazardous to

anyone doing exercise, but especially to those whom are pregnant.

“It is important to drink a lot of water, keep cool and don’t over exert yourself,” Ponce recommended.

“Heat injuries are extremely dangerous, and people must be aware of the signs and symptoms, as well as how to prevent them.”

Ponce further stated that heat injuries and dehydration can result in early labor and difficult, complicated deliveries.

Delgado suggested modifying exercise routines and times to avoid becoming a heat casualty.

“To help prevent heat-related injuries, (my suggestion) would be exercising in the early morning or late evening out of the direct heat,” she said. “Maybe take it easier on the type of exercise and always drink water.”

Soldier or civilian, Delgado recommends consistent activity during pregnancy. She and Ponce further encourage commanders to send their Soldiers to the program instead of leaving them in mainstream PT activities or simply allowing the Soldiers to become inactive.

“We have the specialized program to assist these Soldiers with their pregnancies,” Ponce said, “And we have the capabilities to keep them mission ready and fit to fight.”

For more information on the Pregnant Soldier Wellness Program call 396-7410 or 396-312.



# Summer heat can be dangerous to pregnant women

## WAMC Preventive Medicine

During summer there is great concern for maintaining hydration and preventing heat injuries. Dehydration can lead to premature labor, said Maj. Renee Ponce, Army Community Health nurse for the Department of Preventive Medicine.

All persons exercising or working outdoors during the summer should drink a minimum of eight (eight ounces) glasses of water a day.

Don't wait until you are thirsty to drink water. Look at your urine, if it is too dark this could indicate dehydration. Prenatal vitamins do cause urine to be darker in color.

Early signs of heat injury or dehydration that you should watch for are: dizziness, feeling tired or unusually weak, nausea or vomiting, and/or headache.

Bottom line, when in doubt drink, Ponce advises. The wet bulb reading is also a good indicator of which outdoor activity to pursue and how much water to drink and can be obtained by calling Preventive Medicine at 907-HEAT (4238).

Nakita Delgado, coordinator, Pregnancy Soldier Wellness Program, advises that exercising in the early morning and evening can also help to avoid heat injuries.

For more information on heat injury prevention or PSWP refer to the Web site: <http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil>.

For more information on Fort Bragg's program, please contact Community Health at 396-7410 or 396-0312.

Some of the more common signs and symptoms of possible heat injuries include:

- Dizziness
- Headaches
- Nausea
- An unsteady walk
- Weakness or fatigue
- Muscle cramps

Serious symptoms may include:

- Hot body, high temperature
- Confusion, agitation
- Vomiting
- Involuntary bowel movements
- Convulsions
- Weak or rapid pulse
- Unresponsiveness, coma